BRITISH MUSEUM

THE Preſton Miracle.

BEING

A very ſtrange and wonderful Relation of one HEZEKIAH ARMSTRONG, near the Town of PRESTON, in LANCASHIRE, a very rich Farmer, having one only Daughter, a pious young Woman, and a churliſh froward Wife.

How this Farmer being a very godly Man, an charitable to the Poor, the Lord ſent a double Increaſe upon his Corn and Cattle.

Alſo, How an ANGEL appeared to him a Midnight, and revealed many Things which are ſhortly to come to paſs in Europe; the which he was to declare to the World.

WITH THE

DIALOGUE which paſſed between the ANGEL and the FARMER:

Which is here inſerted at large, for the Satisfaction of all Chriſtian People.

Printed for S. GAMIDGE, at his Warehouſe, Leech Street, Worceſter.

The Preſton Miracle.

NEAR the beautiful town of Preſton, in the county of Lancaſter, lived one Hexekiah Armſtrong, an ancient rich farmer, having one only daughter, who was a pious young woman and the daring of his heart. For his own part, he was a man of an exemplary life and converſation, of whom Providence ſeemed to have a particular regard; for he had a double bleſſing attending him; his lands producing every year corn and other grain more plentifully than his neighbour's; which he, like a good chriſtian, (not forgetting the hand that gave it) as bountifully diſpoſed of to the poor; for to ſuch as had but little to lay out, he would beſure to give double meaſure, when his neighbours ſold theirs at a very dear rate.—It may be truly ſaid of this charitable man, that Heaven even ſmiled upon all his undertakings and effects: his flocks fed quietly by day, and nothing diminiſhed them by night; and a wonderful was on all his ſtore.—But, alas! he was not without temporal vexations and troubles, the greateſt of which was a turbulent wife; who being of a peeviſh churliſh nature, always craving for riches, & afraid

ſhe ſhould die for want and hunger, if any one came to the door to aſk for alms, ſhe would tell them—That truly ſhe had nothing to beſtow; for times were very hard, & ſhe did not know how ſoon ſhe might want herſelf, if that raging diſtemper the plague ſhould come about. Then would this good man ſay, O wretched uncharitable woman! has the Lord endowed us with ſuch riches for thee to ſend the poor away empty? Bleſſed Lord, let not the ſins of this uncharitable creature be upon me, but avert thy juſt judgments, and deliver me in the great day of wrath.

One day above the reſt a poor widow having three children came to the farmer for a peck of wheat, which he meaſured out to by heaps, & gave her three handfuls over, that each child might have the better meal: which his wife ſeeing, ſhe began to ſcold at him, wiſhing that the Lord would take her out of this troubleſome world, for ſhe was ſure thoſe meaſures would ſoon bring her to poverty.

The good man to avoid further ſtrife, walk'd into the grounds, and pulled out the Practice of Piety, which he always carried about him.—Walking and reading, he at length came to a large ſpreading oak, whoſe delicate green boughs affording a pleaſant ſhade, he ſat himſelf down under it, ruminating on his paſt life, and expecting of death and eternity. Leaning his head

upon his hand he fell asleep, and waked not till the moon darting her beams on his face caused him to arise. Guessing it to be late, he bent his steps homeward; but coming within a field of his house, he spied a person walking in another path, as happened to meet him at the stile. This stranger, who appeared to be but young, was cloathed in fine raiment. his hair white as flax, his coat of a high colour spangled with gold, his vest of pure purple, his stockings of a delicate green, and every way so nicely dress't that he appeared more like an angel than a human creature; and coming up with the farmer, with a civil behaviour and courteous language, thus accosted him:—Honest father, if you live hereabouts, pray direct a stranger where he may find a habitation to rest his weary limbs till morning, it being now the dead time of night. Pretty youth, said the farmer, you have but about two miles to Preston, where you'll meet with inns for your accommodation; and to oblige so courteous a stranger, if you will go with me, I will send my servant to conduct you thither. I kindly thank you, said the stranger, but would willingly find rest nearer, which if you prepare for me, I promise you shall not go unrewarded. Sweet youth, replied the farmer, I fear my habitation is too mean for such a guest as you, but nevertheless I would make an offer it, if I did not fear that my wife, who is of a turbulent

temper, might diſpleaſe you. Nothing ſhall diſpleaſe me, ſaid the ſtranger: ſo I deſire that I may lodge with you in your houſe till morning, when I muſt go about my maſter's buſineſs. Why, are you a ſervant? ſaid the farmer. As for that, ſaid the ſtranger, you ſhall know e'er we part.— Then they went both together, and the farmer gave him a hearty welcome to his houſe; but the ſtranger refuſed to eat or drink, deſiring only a little diſcourſe with the farmer, who conſented thereto.

When they were both ſet down, the farmer ſaid: I remember you ſaid you was a ſervant; I deſire to know who is your maſter, if it be no offence. The maſter I ſerve, replied the ſtranger, is a good and gracious lord, moſt holy and righteous; his poſſeſſions are large, his tenants many, his rewards bountiful, his love immenſe. So good a lord & maſter, ſaid the farmer, cannot be too much lov'd, nor too faithfully ſerv'd; and I'd fain know his name. That you ſhall, ſaid the ſtranger, before we part: in the mean time I muſt inform you, that it is he who hears the cries and relieves the wants of the poor, & never fails to help thoſe who with an humble heart addreſs themſelves to him—I find you to be a man of uprightneſs, and that the bleſſing of God is upon you; therefore I will reveal ſeveral miraculous things to you that will ſurely come to paſs, which you ponder well in your

heart, and reveal the ſame to the world when I am gone. — An univerſal peace will happen in Europe, and plenty of all things will enſue; the poor will no more complain, for wheat will be at three ſhillings a buſhel. Rome will meet with a fatal blow blow for her ſuperſtitions, after which the Proteſtant Religion ſhall flouriſh for ages to come. Let England repent, and return due thanks to the Lord for her proſperity and plenty, which may continue God's bleſſing upon her. All trading will flouriſh, and there will be joy in every ones face thro' the plenty of all things: for the Lord will bleſs the land once more, and try if his people will remember their God, who relieved them in the day of trouble, when there was a ſcarcity of corn, all trading dead, and the bloody ſword drawn in the field. This, ſaid the farmer, will be the joyfulleſt time England ever yet ſaw: and I hope I may deſire, without offence, a certain teſtimony from you for the truth of this. Is not thy right hand well and ſound as it ſhould be? ſaid the ſtranger. Yes, replied the farmer. Then put it in thy boſom, and immediately pull it out again. This the farmer had no ſooner done but he felt extreme pain, his hand and arm being full of blotches. Behold, ſaid the ſtranger, this is ſuffered to come upon thee, not only as a token that what I have ſaid will ſurely come to paſs, but likewiſe as a certain ſign that what I have

further to relate to thee will happen: therefore put thy hand in thy boſom again, and it ſhall be well; and diligently attend while I relate one more matter of moment, for time grows ſhort. The farmer obeying the ſtranger, to his great joy his hand was reſtored, and then the ſtranger proceeded.——But e'er this plenty ſhall come, there ſhall three calamities befal England; the firſt will be a ſwelling diſtemper in the throat and face, which will happen very frequent in moſt parts, but not very mortal, and will affect young people chiefly. The ſecond will be the ſmall pox, which will prove very fatal in London and other places in this kingdom, and will ſweep away abundance of people. The third will be a fever, which will rage very much, eſpecially in the weſtern and ſouthern parts of the land, and many will die thereof, particularly middle aged perſons. For thy part thou ſhalt live to ſee all theſe things: be therefore upright and juſt in all thy ways, & the Lord ſhall bleſs thee tenfold. The Lord be praiſed for all his wond'rous works, ſaid the farmer; but ſince thou haſt told me this, pray give me a ſign that I may know the maſter you ſerve. As for my my maſter, replied the ſtranger, he has many names; but if you will look into the glaſs when I am gone, thou ſhalt find a ſign in thy forehead, by which thou wilt know who he is; & to confirm the truth of what I have ſaid, go to

thy chamber, and thou ſhalt find thy wife dead of the ſwelling diſtemper in her throat. Upon which the farmer running up ſtairs, found it was true as the ſtranger had ſaid; and coming down again, perceived he was gone; when going to the glaſs, he, to his great aſtoniſhment, ſaw the Croſs upon his forehead; which made him think that the perſon who told him theſe things was an Angel: whereupon he cried out, Lord, I believe! help my unbelief! Afhaving praiſed God, he called for his ſervants and ſhewed them the Croſs on his forehead, which they endeavoured to wipe out, but in vain. Nevertheleſs in ſome few hours it dwindled away to nothing.

The Truth of this is atteſted by the Miniſter and Churchwardens of the Pariſh, and many other reputable Perſons.

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